

American

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Panetta at NATO Cites Significant Progress in Afghanistan

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer |
11 October 2012

Washington — Defense Secretary Leon Panetta says the United States and coalition partners have made significant progress in improving security and handing over responsibilities to national security forces in Afghanistan.

Speaking at a NATO defense ministers conference October 10, Panetta said a surge of U.S. and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) forces has concluded and was successful in regaining control of ground under Taliban insurgent control in 2011 and preventing the Taliban from regaining any of those areas. In addition, the surge forces were successful in pushing the Taliban out of even more areas in 2012, he said.

“Compared to a year ago, more Afghans are secure, and the conflict has moved farther away from the population centers,” Panetta said during a briefing for journalists. In addition, Afghan security forces have now grown to approximately 350,000 men, recruitment and retention is remaining steady, and these new forces have taken on greater security responsibilities, including a willingness to take the fight to the insurgency, he said.

The defense ministers met at NATO headquarters in Brussels for updates on operations in Afghanistan and to discuss the way ahead in the phased transition to full Afghan security control by the end of 2014. It was Panetta’s fifth meeting with the defense ministers as secretary of defense and the first meeting for the ministers following the 2012 Chicago NATO Summit.

Panetta told journalists that with the surge complete, the United States and NATO-led security forces have reached a critical moment for the alliance in Afghanistan. He said that there are three keys to future success.

First, the coalition must maintain a strong partnership with the Afghan forces, Panetta said. “We must do everything we can to help Afghan security forces successfully transition and take the lead for security throughout all of Afghanistan as planned next year,” he said.

That includes, he added, building the capabilities of the Afghan army and police by providing security force assistance teams with embedded trainers and mentors. Panetta said during a press briefing in Brussels that an additional 58 military training teams are needed, and that was discussed at length by the defense ministers in Brussels.

Second, Panetta said the U.S. and NATO-led security forces must provide an effective response to insider attacks — in which Afghans or insurgents masquerading as Afghan security personnel kill or attack allied forces. “Insider attacks are a tragic part of every war, and the enemy exploits them to undermine mutual trust and cohesion,” Panetta told reporters. Marine General John Allen and Panetta briefed coalition leaders on steps being taken alongside Afghan military partners to diminish and defeat the threat posed by insider attacks.

“These steps include enhancing training, adapting our partnership based on real-time threat information, expansion of vetting and counterintelligence operations, and the use of guardian angels to deter and stop attackers,” Panetta said. “Partnership even closer will frustrate the enemy’s designs to capitalize on this problem.”

Allen is slated to become the next commander of the U.S. European Command and also NATO supreme allied commander. He will succeed Navy Admiral James Stavridis. Marine General Joseph Dunford is expected to succeed Allen as commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan and also commander of ISAF.

Finally, Panetta said that the U.S. and allied forces working with Afghan forces must carefully conduct the campaign plan.

“As we look to the mid-2013 milestone, and to the end of the transition in December of 2014, we anticipate that we will operate from fewer bases, that the net flow of materiel will turn outbound from Afghanistan, that U.S. enabler support for ISAF partners will continue, but the scope of support will change as the transition proceeds and as we jointly reduce our forces, and that as Afghan forces assume full responsibility, ISAF forces will continue stepping back,” Panetta said.

Panetta said that while NATO has not determined the size and composition of the force that will remain in Afghanistan after 2014, “NATO’s presence should be steadfast and effective.”

Regardless of what tactics the insurgents may throw at U.S. and allied forces, they will not allow that to divert forces from their mission or divide them from Afghan partners, he added.

NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen told reporters that the transition of security responsibility to the Afghan forces is progressing according to the timeline established by NATO in agreement with the Afghan government.

“We’re on track to complete it by the end of 2014 when

our combat mission will come to an end,” Rasmussen said. “We must ensure we keep up the momentum of transition and continue to build professional and strong Afghan security forces capable of securing their own country.”

Rasmussen told the assembled defense ministers from NATO nations and allied nations, representing a total of 50 countries, that there will not be any acceleration of the drawdown in forces ahead of the timeline.

Data Sharing Helps Fight Crime, Homeland Security Chief Says

11 October 2012

Sofia, Bulgaria — A formal agreement between Bulgaria and the United States on sharing information on suspected criminals and terrorists will help counterterrorism and law enforcement efforts while protecting individual privacy, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano says.

During a visit to Bulgaria October 9–10, Napolitano signed the "Agreement on Preventing and Combating Serious Crime" with Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Tsvetan Tsvetanov.

“Today’s agreement reaffirms our commitment to working with Bulgaria to combat terrorism and transnational crime,” Napolitano said. “By enhancing information sharing, it will allow law enforcement officials to more quickly and efficiently investigate crimes and prevent the entry of criminals into our countries.”

On October 10, Napolitano, Under Secretary for the National Protection and Programs Directorate Rand Beers, Assistant Secretary for International Affairs Alan Bersin, Bulgarian President Rosen Plevneliev and Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov discussed collaboration on information sharing, law enforcement, cybersecurity, counterterrorism and border security.

During her meetings, Napolitano encouraged continued progress on rule of law reforms and highlighted collaboration between the United States and Bulgaria on cybersecurity, science and technology. In 2011, the Department of Homeland Security participated in the Cyber Atlantic tabletop exercise, a U.S.–EU effort to enhance international collaboration, which is part of the ongoing U.S.–EU partnership to address shared threats to global networks.

While in Bulgaria, Napolitano, Beers and Bersin also met with Bulgarian nongovernmental organizations and visited the Bulgarian National Coordination Center for Border Security and Sofia Airport to survey border-management and passport-control operations.

Following their visit to Bulgaria, Napolitano, Beers and Bersin will hold similar discussions on information sharing and combating international crime with their counterparts in Turkey October 11–12.

U.S. Trade Deficit Grows in August

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 11 October 2012

Washington — The U.S. trade deficit grew to \$44.2 billion in August, up from \$42.5 billion the month before, according to the Commerce Department’s latest report.

The department’s Census Bureau and Bureau of Economic Analysis released the August "U.S. International Trade in Goods and Services" report October 11.

It showed August exports dropped to \$181.3 billion from \$183.2 billion in July. Imports also fell, decreasing \$0.2 billion from July to hit \$225.5 billion.

The July to August decrease in exports of goods reflected decreases in industrial supplies and materials; foods, feeds and beverages; consumer goods; and automotive vehicles, parts and engines. Increases occurred in capital goods and "other" goods.

The monthly drop in imports of goods reflected decreases in consumer goods; automotive vehicles, parts and engines; and capital goods. Increases occurred in industrial supplies and materials; other goods; and foods, feeds and beverages.

The July to August increase in exports of services was mostly accounted for by increases in private services, which includes business, professional and technical services and insurance and financial services, as well as other transportation, which includes freight and port services.

The monthly increase in imports of services was accounted for by an increase in royalties and license fees.

The goods deficit increased \$1.5 billion from July to \$59.3 billion as the services surplus decreased \$0.3 billion from July to \$15.1 billion.

From August 2011 to August 2012, the goods and services deficit decreased \$0.6 billion.

The latest figures show trade surpluses with Hong Kong, Australia, Singapore and Egypt. Deficits were recorded with China, the European Union, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Japan, Germany, Mexico, Canada, Ireland, Venezuela, South Korea, Taiwan and Nigeria.

The Commerce Department said the September trade report will be issued November 8.

India's Reforms Lay Foundation for Strong Growth

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 10 October 2012

Washington — Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner has praised India's economic reforms, which he said will help lay a foundation "for stronger economic growth, an increase in investment and more widespread gains in income."

Speaking to reporters after the 2012 U.S.-India Economic and Financial Partnership meeting in Delhi October 9, Geithner said he and Indian Finance Minister P. Chidambaram reviewed the opportunities for expansion of Indian firms in the United States and U.S. firms in India.

India's plan to invest \$1 trillion over the next five years to develop its infrastructure offers huge investment opportunities for U.S. businesses and investors, the secretary and minister said in a joint statement released at the end of the meeting.

"We are committed to make these investments to enhance competitiveness of our economies and to prepare our people and industry to compete in today's globalized world," Geithner and Chidambaram said in the statement. "Infrastructure debt funds and other recent capital market reforms offer huge investment opportunities for U.S. businesses and investors."

The annual U.S.-India partnership meetings that began in 2010 represent the highest level of engagement between the two countries. "The rapidly expanding financial and economic relationship between our two countries is at the core of our multifaceted relationship and is based on shared values and an increasing convergence of interests," Geithner and Chidambaram said.

Geithner noted that President Obama has identified the U.S.-India relationship as "one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century."

Geithner and Chidambaram declared that their governments will work together at the Group of 20 (G20) and other international groups to help steer the global economy through uncertainties toward strong, sustainable and balanced growth. Bilaterally, they promised stronger cooperation to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

Last month, Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy and the Environment Robert Hormats hosted the India Investment Forum in New York, where he said that U.S.-India trade has reached nearly \$100

billion. He said the two countries are in the process of negotiating a bilateral investment treaty to make sure that figure grows bigger.

India is the world's ninth largest economy with a gross domestic product of about \$2 trillion. It is projected to grow into the world's third largest economy and its fifth largest consumer market by 2025, according to Hormats.

India's infrastructure investment plan is attracting \$24 billion in foreign direct investment from the United States that is "modernizing supply chains, building new airports and power plants and helping to forge the Indian economy of the future," Hormats said.

Conversely, India's foreign direct investment in the United States reached \$3.3 billion in 2010 and has contributed to the creation of 30,000 new jobs in the United States, he said.

U.S. Joins Global Campaign to Stop Child Marriage

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 10 October 2012

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton announced October 10 that the United States will join a campaign to stop child marriage by the year 2030.

Clinton made the announcement before an audience of Girl Scouts, invited to the State Department in recognition of the International Day of the Girl, a U.N. commemoration set for October 11.

The secretary began her remarks by describing a "very brave" Pakistani girl, Malala Yousufzai. She has achieved wide recognition for her assertion of girls' rights to education, but was shot October 9 in an attack by extremists opposed to the education of women. Clinton said, "Yesterday's attack reminds us of the challenges that girls face, whether it's poverty or marginalization or even violence, just for speaking out for their basic rights."

The U.S. State Department has a history of denouncing child marriage, but Clinton committed the nation to greater efforts to end the practice in the next 17 years.

Each year, 10 million girls under 18 are forced into marriage, Clinton said, "which robs them of the opportunity to continue education, and it threatens health and traps them in lives of poverty."

In keeping with her previously announced intention to keep the concerns of girls and women at the heart of U.S. foreign policy, Clinton outlined the steps the nation will take to help end child marriage:

- The State Department will focus greater attention on the issue in its annual global assessment of human rights.

- The U.S. Agency for International Development will join the government of Bangladesh in a campaign to assess a variety of approaches to discourage child marriage.
- USAID and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) will tackle barriers, such as cost and safety, that keep girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from continuing their education.
- Every international teacher who comes to the United States for training programs will learn how to help girls stay in school and complete their education.

The announcement came at a celebration of the United Nations' first International Day of the Girl. The day is intended as part of a movement to denounce gender bias and advocate for girls' rights everywhere. The date was chosen because of its numeric representation, 10-11-12. Those are the ages when life can become dangerous for maturing girls, who might be sold into marriage or forced labor, the United Nations said.

The campaign "Girls Not Brides: the Global Partnership to End Child Marriage" is championed by The Elders, a group of internationally known leaders who work together for global peace and justice. South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu is chairman of the group, which includes former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and former Irish President Mary Robinson.

Tutu joined Clinton at the State Department for the event, speaking to the audience of girls with a mix of tenderness, admiration and inspiration.

"Without women the world faces perdition, destruction," he said. "We need you, we need you to save us."

While he acknowledged that society has advanced considerably in its acceptance of women in roles of influence and power, more progress must be made, Tutu said. He challenged the young people to keep on dreaming, to dream of a better future for everyone, everywhere.

"Dream of a different world, where every child has access to clean water, and every child has enough food to eat," Tutu said. "We want to make poverty history; we want to make child marriage history."

But The Elders aren't merely dreaming. The "Girls Not Brides" campaign has won the backing of generous donors. The U.N. Population Fund is contributing \$20 million, and another \$25 million is coming from the Ford Foundation, Clinton said.

The transition from primary to secondary school is a life passage in the lives of many girls in the developing world

when too many lose the opportunity to pursue further education. Devising ways to make that passage a successful one is another part of this campaign, Clinton said, and it is receiving \$39 million from the MasterCard Foundation and \$10 million from the MacArthur Foundation.

Almost 200 organizations in 38 countries are supporting the "Girls Not Brides" campaign.

Both Political Parties Court America's Most Reliable Voters

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 10 October 2012

Washington — U.S. presidential candidates spend much of their campaigns discussing plans for entitlement programs like Social Security, Medicare and the American health system for a very important reason: U.S. seniors, who are most immediately affected by these types of government assistance, are paying close attention, and they are the most likely people to vote.

Analysis of past voter turnout has shown that in the United States, voting and registration rates have tended to increase with age. In the 2010 congressional election, 61 percent of those 65 and older voted, compared with only 21 percent of 18-to-24-year-olds.

Historically, older Americans have been more likely to vote Republican, and a majority of those 65 and older have backed the Republican candidate in the last two presidential elections. According to an analysis of the 2008 election, Republican nominee John McCain captured 53 percent of the elderly vote compared to President Obama's 46 percent. In 2012, the critical swing states of Florida, Pennsylvania and Iowa each have significant senior populations.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2011 persons 65 or over constituted 13.3 percent of the U.S. population, or more than 41 million people. The median age of these U.S. senior citizens is 74, and 84 percent of them are retired. Due to advances in health care and longer life spans, the Census Bureau predicts that the U.S. senior population will more than double to 88.5 million by 2050, making up 20 percent of the population.

In the middle decades of the 20th century, the U.S. government set up social safety net programs like Social Security and Medicare, funded by American taxpayers, so seniors who left the workforce and became more likely to need health care would have a reliable income and support for their health costs. Many of today's elderly, after paying into these programs throughout their careers, now depend upon them in addition to their personal retirement savings for their well-being.

The elderly share concerns with other Americans over the state of the U.S. economy, tax rates and the U.S. federal deficit. With many working-age Americans still looking for jobs and reliant on parents, those old enough to remember the hardships of the Great Depression recall the dangers of being in debt and large-scale financial insecurity.

In September, both President Obama and Republican vice presidential nominee Paul Ryan addressed a summit of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), one of the largest U.S. membership organizations and a powerful lobbying group in Washington.

Both referred to their late grandmothers in an effort to show their understanding of seniors' concerns.

President Obama told the story of Madelyn Dunham, who had worked during World War II on a bomber assembly line "with a baby at home while her husband was off serving his country." He said that after working all of her life, "what she hoped for in return was to be able to live out her golden years with dignity and security, and to see her grandchildren and her great-grandchildren have a better life."

Obama said his grandmother did not want "help from me or anybody else. She just wanted to make sure that the work she had put in was going to pay off."

Ryan said that when he thought about the Medicare program, "I don't think about charts and graphs and numbers," but instead of "my wonderful grandma, Janet; she had Alzheimer's, and she moved in with my mom and me."

Though the disease affected her memory, "we did all those little things that made her feel loved. We had help from Medicare and it was there, just like it's there for my mom today," he said.

As President Obama and Republican challenger Mitt Romney continue to make their case to American voters, those most likely to show up at the polls will be listening carefully on how they plan to reduce the U.S. federal deficit while continuing to keep programs like Medicare and Social Security intact.

U.S.-Japan Friendship Grows Through Economic Cooperation

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 10 October 2012

Washington — The U.S.-Japan relationship has deepened during the past five years as the two countries have worked together to confront the global economic crisis by improving trade and business ties, a Commerce Department official says.

"More bilateral investment — in both directions — clearly translates to more jobs and greater prosperity in both countries," said Acting Commerce Secretary Rebecca Blank.

Speaking October 5 at the U.S.-Japan Council's 2012 conference in Seattle, Blank said the U.S. and Japanese economies are continuing to support each other through recovery.

"The two-way trade of goods between the United States and Japan is quickly returning to the levels we saw before the recession hit — over \$190 billion last year," she said. "In fact, if the second half of 2012 is as strong as the first, we will break a new record."

In an effort to achieve a strong and balanced bilateral trade relationship, Blank said, the United States is building up its services sector. She said the Commerce Department is particularly focusing on boosting travel and tourism, the country's strongest services export.

So far in 2012, the number of visits from Japanese tourists in the United States is up more than 13 percent from this time last year.

"We want to build on that momentum, not just because it will help lead to more balanced trade, but also because it promotes greater understanding between our people and our cultures," Blank said. "That's critically important."

She said the U.S. government is working to ease travel to the United States for visitors from across the globe by streamlining visa processing, offering better customer service by border patrol officers at airports and better supporting small businesses and tourism agencies in the travel industry.

Beyond these sector-specific efforts to foster greater U.S.-Japan trade, Blank said there are broader opportunities to do so.

"The Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations are a good example," she said. "It's been nearly a year since Japan announced its desire to start consultations with TPP members on the possibility of its participation in negotiations."

Blank said the United States has "welcomed that interest," and that consultations continue.

"We look to Japan to be prepared to meet the TPP's high standards for liberalizing trade," including removing barriers to trade in the manufacturing, agriculture and services sector, she said.

The United States and Japan are also enhancing economic

ties through foreign investment.

"Both U.S. investment in Japan and Japanese investment in the U.S. have grown by over 20 percent from 2009 to 2011," Blank said.

She said Japan is the second largest source of foreign direct investment in the United States, supporting about 650,000 American jobs.

"More bilateral investment, in both directions, clearly translates to more jobs and greater prosperity in both countries," Blank said. "And as we trade more with each other and invest more in each other, it's natural that we will continue to deepen the person-to-person ties between our countries."

She said these ties are critical, especially when either country suffers from an unexpected disaster such as the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster in Japan in March 2011.

"The entire United States mourned the loss of the thousands of Japanese citizens who died in the tsunami, and we quickly took action," the acting secretary said.

Operation Tomodachi was launched immediately after the disaster, deploying 24,000 members of the U.S. military to help with disaster recovery efforts. Following the initial response, the United States has helped to support cleanup and remediation, deepen business ties and create new student exchanges through the Tomodachi Initiative.

The United States and Japan are also collaborating on the tracking and cleanup of tsunami debris in the waters of the U.S. West Coast, in Alaska and Hawaii, and in Canada.

"Together, we will collect data, assess potential threats and work to minimize the potential impact of any tsunami debris on our natural resources and coastal communities," Blank said.

She said the U.S.-Japan friendship "has emerged stronger in the face of challenge and adversity," will "continue to persevere through any kind of disaster or crisis that might arise," and will "lead to greater strength and prosperity for people in both countries as we enter the next 100 years."

Blank said the U.S. government will be sending 3,000 dogwood trees to Japan to commemorate the centennial of Japan's gift of flowering cherry trees to the United States in 1912.

"My hope is that our friends in Japan will look at those

dogwoods in the same way that we look at our cherry blossoms: a beautiful and enduring symbol of the friendship between two great nations," she said.

The acting secretary was joined at the conference by government and private-sector leaders from across the United States and Japan.

Libraries Untapped Development Resource, Group Says

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 10 October 2012

Washington — Libraries are untapped, cost-effective local resources that can be used to address the development challenges of the 21st century, according to a consortium of organizations involved in advancing global development.

The consortium, called Beyond Access, wants public libraries to be development hubs with trained librarians who collect and synthesize information and make it available to users in electronic and print formats. Now working in 19 countries, Beyond Access is led by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Washington-based nonprofit group IREX, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, and Riecken Community Libraries. The group met in Washington October 3 with 450 library, technology and development professionals from 35 countries.

"Whether it's a library in Nepal providing information on HIV prevention or a library in Ukraine helping entrepreneurs open a new business, the local library helps all of us address local development priorities," said Rob Cronin, IREX vice president.

Beyond Access notes that more than 230,000 public libraries, or 73 percent of the world's total, are in communities in developing or transitioning countries. They provide training in how to use computers and social media to access information, how to use information to connect with new markets or find capital to launch a business, and how to use current medical research results to treat an illness.

Libraries also serve as spaces where people can meet to discuss local issues, several conference participants noted. "When communities get information about their country's national development plan, the plan becomes theirs, and it can help the government establish a culture of transparency and accountability. It can let people see how the country's aid funding is being used," said Lidia Fromm, Honduras' vice minister for social development.

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator Rajiv Shah said private investment in information technologies has transformed the lives of

billions of people. Technologies such as the Internet and text messaging are “forward drivers of development,” he said.

USAID has used information technology and social media to reach out to people in isolated areas with health, agriculture, weather and other information useful to them, Shah said. “The more we have access to information, the more will change,” he added.

Hundreds of library innovators are already doing development work, Beyond Access notes. In Ghana, public libraries are running a technology training program to fight high unemployment and school drop-out rates. In Colombia, innovative public libraries in at-risk communities are helping to reduce poverty, it says.

In Ukraine, a farmer named Viktor saw a neighbor use a mechanical potato planter. He turned to his local Bibliomist library in Lubyanka, where a librarian helped him identify retailers, select a brand and place an order. Viktor said the planter makes field work much easier, and he is earning additional income by offering his planting services to other farmers.

Bibliomist is a partnership between the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, IREX, the Ukrainian Library Association, local and national governments, and libraries throughout the country.

Another Ukrainian farmer, Oleksiy of Nerushay, used information on trends in agriculture that he learned at his local library to purchase a feed pellet mill. The mill dispenses pellets to Oleksiy’s rabbits and chickens in less time than the task took before, allowing the animals to reach full weight earlier and make the farmer more money.

“If we’re going to deliver on ambitious development goals within the next two decades, then we have to employ a much bigger definition of development to get us there,” Shah said.

Goal for Reducing World Hunger Reachable, U.N. Reports

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 10 October 2012

Washington — New estimates show that the goal of cutting in half the proportion of people suffering from hunger between 1990 and 2015 may be possible, the United Nations reports.

The target was set in 2000 in a Millennium Development Goal agreed to by 189 nations, including the United States.

In *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012*, released

October 9, the United Nations says progress in reducing world hunger has been better than previously reported. But, it adds, the total of almost 870 million people — or one in eight people in the world — who suffer from chronic undernourishment is still “unacceptably high” and eradicating hunger remains a global challenge. The report presents estimates based on improved methodology and data.

The report states that world regions have differed in their rates of progress in reducing hunger. It says undernourishment decreased nearly 30 percent in Asia and the Pacific since the early 1990s, largely because of socioeconomic progress in the region.

Latin America and the Caribbean also made progress, but the rate there has slowed in recent years.

Africa was the only region where the number of hungry increased, with 20 million people added since 2008. In sub-Saharan Africa, progress achieved before 2007 has reversed and hunger has risen 2 percent since then.

Developing regions also saw the number of hungry rise, reversing a steady decrease in the two decades before 2010.

The report states that sustainable agricultural growth is particularly effective in reducing hunger and malnutrition because most of the world’s poor live in rural areas in developing countries and depend on agriculture for much of their livelihoods. The report draws attention to the growth potential of smallholder farmers, especially women, and to the dual need to reduce hunger and protect the environment. A greater focus on integrating smallholder farmers into markets will help them meet future food demands and open up opportunities for linkages with the rural non-farm economy, the report states.

Agricultural growth also needs to result in more opportunities for low-income people to diversify their diets to gain better nutrition; have access to safe drinking water, sanitation and health services; and be more aware of good nutrition and child-care practices.

Growth needs to be accompanied by public policies and programs that provide equal access to resources, empower women, provide social protections for the most vulnerable groups, and strengthen the ability of smallholder farmers to manage risks and adopt improved technologies, the report says.

For policies and programs to be effective, governance must be based on transparency, participation, accountability, rule of law and respect for human rights. Economic growth should bring additional government

revenues from taxes and fees that should be used to fund education, nutrition and health programs.

The report says current estimates do not fully reflect the effect on hunger of the 2007–2008 food price spikes.

The United States' Feed the Future program calls for reducing world hunger. It uses innovation, research and development to improve agricultural productivity, link farmers to local and regional markets, enhance nutrition and build safety nets.

World Economic Growth Slowing, IMF Says

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer | 09 October 2012

Washington — Recovery of the global economy continues, but at a slower rate than projected earlier in 2012, the International Monetary Fund reports in its latest *World Economic Outlook*.

The IMF released the Outlook October 9 in advance of the IMF–World Bank meetings October 11–12 in Tokyo. More than 10,000 central bankers, ministers of finance and development, academics, business leaders and journalists are expected at the fall meetings to discuss global economic issues.

The IMF projects that advanced economies will grow just 1.3 percent in 2012, compared with 1.6 percent in 2011 and 3.0 percent in 2010. It states that the growth is too slow to make a major dent in unemployment rates and that policies in major advanced economies have not rebuilt confidence in medium-term prospects for growth.

The fund projects that emerging markets and developing countries will grow 5.3 percent in 2012, compared with 6.2 percent in 2011. It says that China, India, Russia and Brazil all will see slower growth in 2012 and that growth in world trade is projected to go down to 3.2 percent in 2012, from 5.8 percent in 2011 and 12.6 percent in 2010.

“Low growth and uncertainty in advanced economies are affecting emerging market and developing economies through both trade and financial channels,” said IMF Chief Economist Olivier Blanchard. That adds to “homegrown weaknesses,” he said.

Various factors are affecting the rates of growth, the fund states. It says that pulling growth down in advanced economies are fiscal consolidation and a still-weak financial system that weighs on demand. Pulling up growth in many countries are central banks' accommodative monetary policies that have launched new programs to buy bonds and keep interest rates low, it adds.

The IMF reports that prospects for stronger growth could

improve if clouds over the euro area and the U.S. budget are lifted. It says that high employment growth and solid consumption should continue to propel demand in many emerging economies and, with an easing of macroeconomic policies, should support investment and growth.

Other IMF projections contained in the World Economic Outlook include the following:

- Growth in the United States will average 2.2 percent in 2012 and 2.75 percent in 2013. Weak household finances and confidence and continued fiscal consolidation stand in the way of stronger growth.
- Growth in the euro area will decline by 0.4 percent in 2012 and stay flat in the first half of 2013 before increasing slightly in the last half of the year. The euro area's “core” economies are expected to see low but positive growth through 2013, while the other euro economies will contract in 2012 then begin to recover in 2013.
- Growth in Japan is expected to be 2.2 percent in 2012 and grow by about 1.0 percent in the first half of 2013 as post-earthquake reconstruction winds down.
- In developing Asia, growth will average 6.7 percent in 2012, with China expected to receive a boost from accelerated approval of public infrastructure projects. Growth in India is expected to be 5.0 percent and, helped by recently announced reforms, will go up to 6.0 percent in 2013.
- Growth in the Middle East and North Africa is likely to slow to about 1.25 percent in 2012 because of uncertainty associated with political and economic transitions but will rebound modestly in 2013.
- In Latin America, growth is expected to be about 3.25 percent in the last half of 2012 and go up to 4.75 percent in 2013. Growth in Brazil is projected to be strong as a result of fiscal measures to boost demand and an easing of monetary policy since 2011.
- Central and Eastern European economies will have somewhat stronger demand due to improved financial conditions in crisis economies. Growth in most of the former Soviet Union states will be 4.0 percent in 2012 but will be 3.7 percent in Russia.
- Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to grow strongly, with most countries growing more than 5.0 percent. The exception is South Africa, which has been hampered by its strong links with Europe.

The United States is the IMF's largest shareholder.

U.S. Unemployment Rate Drops as Economy Adds Jobs

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer | 05 October 2012

Washington — The U.S. unemployment rate hit 7.8 percent in September, dropping from 8.1 percent the month before and reaching its lowest level since January

2009.

The Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics released its monthly employment report October 5.

"Overall, the monthly drop in the unemployment rate is part of a larger trend that has seen the jobless rate fall by 1.2 percent over the last year," Labor Secretary Hilda Solis said following the report's release.

"We saw unemployment drop for every group across the board last month," Solis said. "The fastest-growing group of new hires was young people ages 20 to 24 — a very encouraging sign for our country's future."

The U.S. economy added 114,000 new jobs in September, according to the report. The report said also that the number of unemployed persons, at 12.1 million, decreased by 456,000 during the month.

Additionally, revisions to previous employment reports showed 86,000 more Americans found jobs in July and August than had been previously reported.

"We've now added nearly 5.2 million private-sector jobs over 31 straight months of job growth," Solis said.

Alan Krueger, chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, said the new report "provides further evidence that the U.S. economy is continuing to heal from the wounds inflicted by the worst downturn since the Great Depression."

The report showed notable employment gains in the fields of health care and social assistance; transportation and warehousing; restaurants and bars; financial activities; and professional and business services.

Manufacturing posted job losses, primarily in durable goods.

Solis said the improved jobs outlook is one indication of a strengthening U.S. economy. She said new unemployment insurance claims are down to pre-recession levels, consumer confidence is near a five-year high and the number of people laid off in September was the lowest level ever reported.

The October employment report is scheduled to be released November 2, according to the Labor Department.

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